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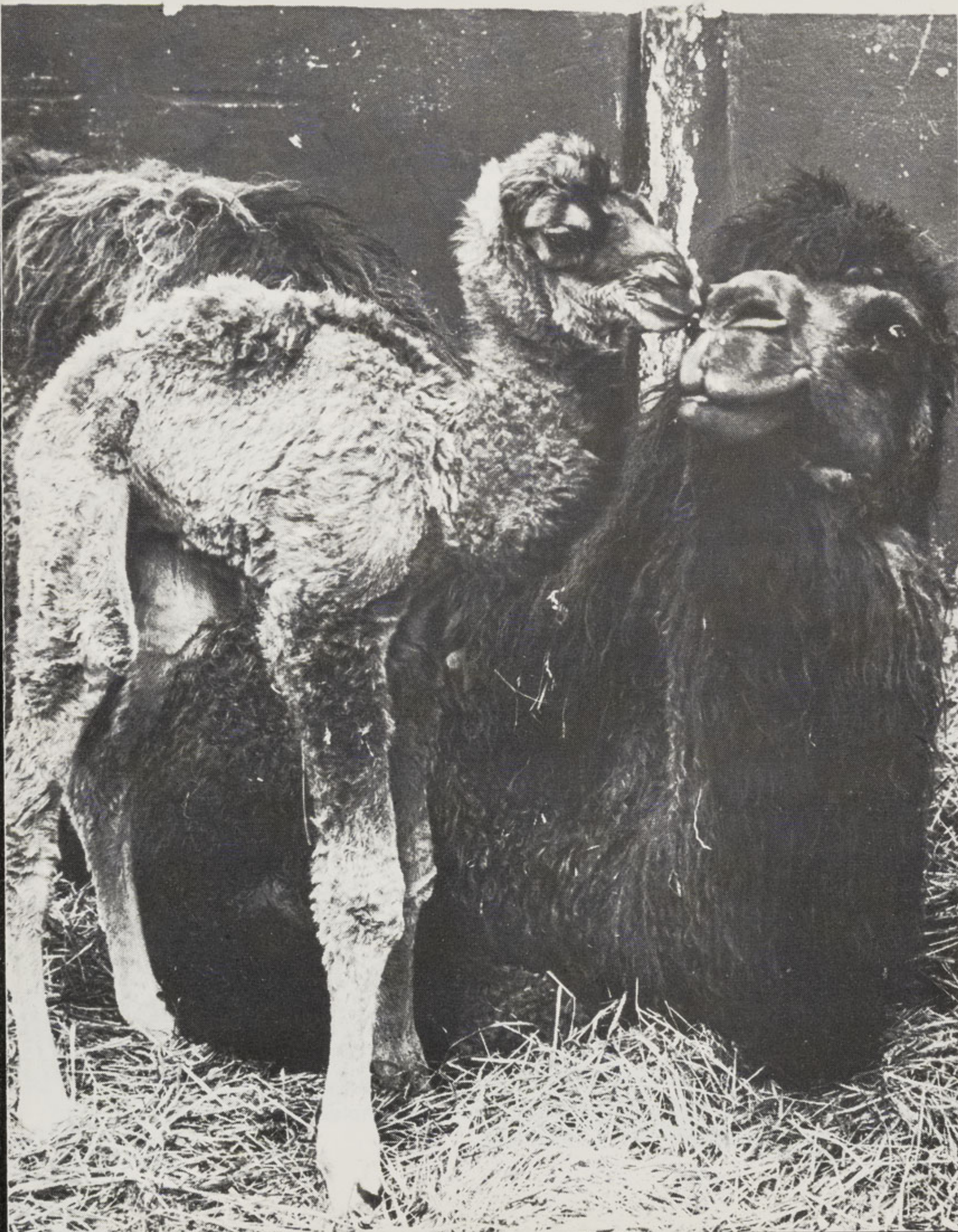
CHESTER ZOO NEWS



Zoological Gardens
Chester CH2 1LH

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1981 No. 5



Crocodiles

The crocodiles are a group of reptiles which have not changed very much since they first appeared about 200 million years ago—that is, crocodiles have been around for double the time that has passed since the Dinosaurs died out.

Today there are 22 species alive in the group. The most famous is the Nile Crocodile, which lives in rivers throughout Africa. Up to six metres long, the crocodile feeds on other animals. Small crocodiles feed on insects, crabs and snails. Larger crocodiles feed on fish, other reptiles and small mammals and birds that venture into and onto the water. Fully-grown Nile Crocodiles will take antelope, up to the size of buffalo, that come down to the water's edge to drink. They kill their prey by drowning.

The mother Nile Crocodile lays a clutch of about 50 eggs in a nest in a sandbank. The mother remains near the nest throughout the 90-odd days it takes for the eggs to hatch, and her presence deters animals such as baboons from raiding the nest and stealing the eggs. The young crocodile has a horny tip to its snout to help it break out of its shell, and the mother digs out the sand to help the hatchlings to reach the surface and make their way to the water, where she remains with them for a few days.

Because of the danger of being eaten by other crocodiles, the young crocodiles do not mix with the adults until they are about one metre long. Like all crocodiles, the Nile Crocodile is threatened by Man, not because it is a dangerous animal to have living nearby, but because its skin is used to make leathers. At Chester, we intend to make a new crocodile exhibit in the Tropical House,

where we can show fully-grown Nile Crocodiles, which, hopefully, might be persuaded to breed.

There are three families of living crocodiles in the group. The Nile Crocodile is one of what we call the "true crocodiles". The other members of this family are the African Sharp-nosed Crocodile, the African Dwarf Crocodile (which we have) and the Salt Water or Estuarine Crocodile from the Far East. Also from the East are the Mugger, from India, the Siamese Crocodile, the New Guinea Crocodile, Johnson's River Crocodile (which we have), from Australia, and the False Gharial (which we also have). From the Americas, there are four species of true crocodile: the Cuban Crocodile, the Orinoco Crocodile and Morelets Crocodile from Mexico, as well as the American Crocodile itself, from the north of South America to the south of North America.

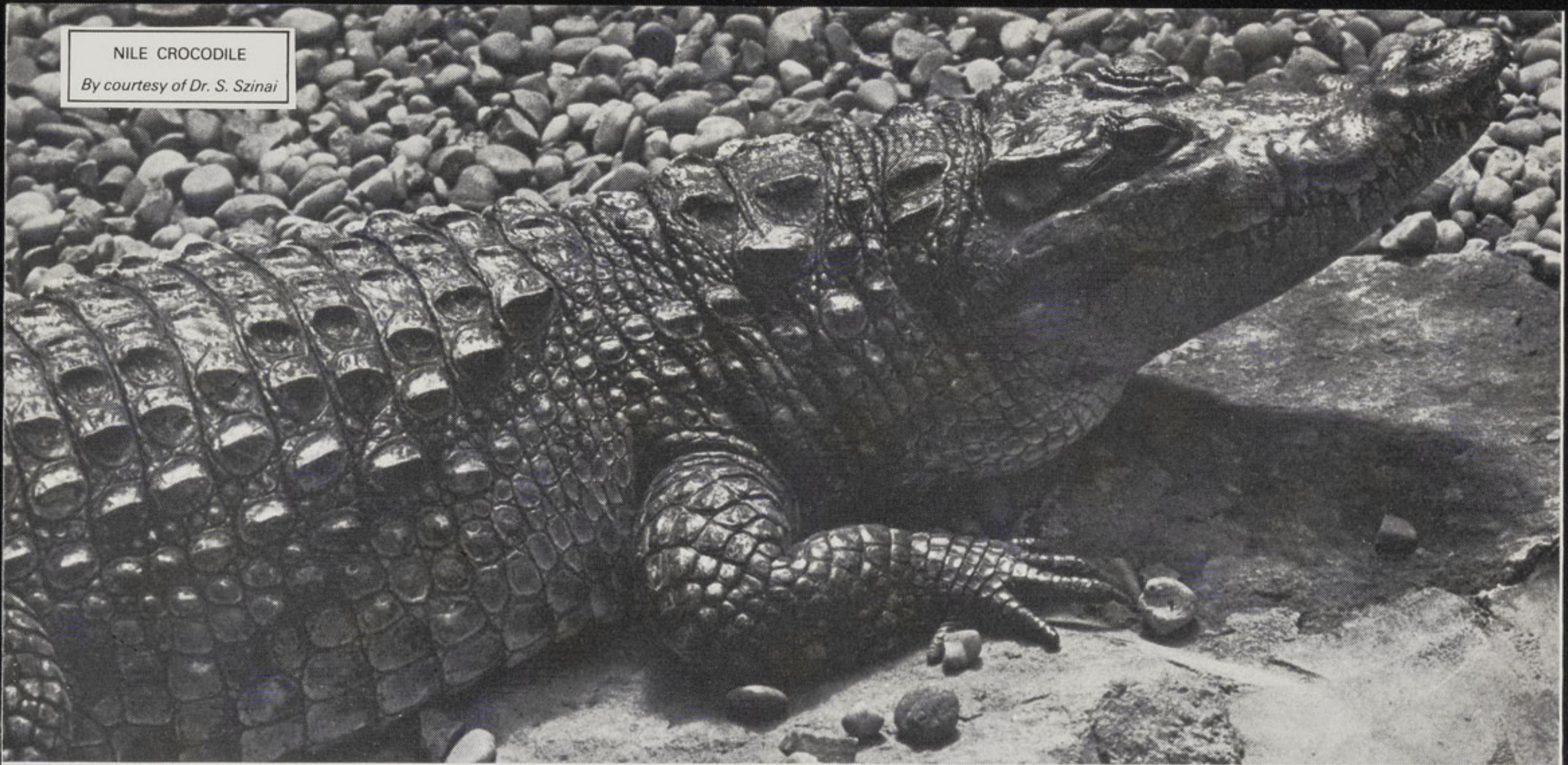
The second family includes the next most famous member of the group, the North American Alligator. Distinguished from the crocodiles by its broad nose, without its fourth tooth (the canine tooth of mammals) sticking out like it does in the true crocodiles. The other alligator is the Chinese Alligator. Also in the family are the four species of caiman: the South American Caiman, the Broad-nosed Caiman, the Smooth-fronted Caiman and the Dwarf Caiman. All the caimans come from South and Central America.

The third family of crocodiles contains only one living species, the True Gharial (or Gavial) of the Indian sub-continent.

Both the True Gharial and the False Gharial, as well as one or two others of the species, have long slender snouts, betraying their complete reliance as adults on fish as their food.

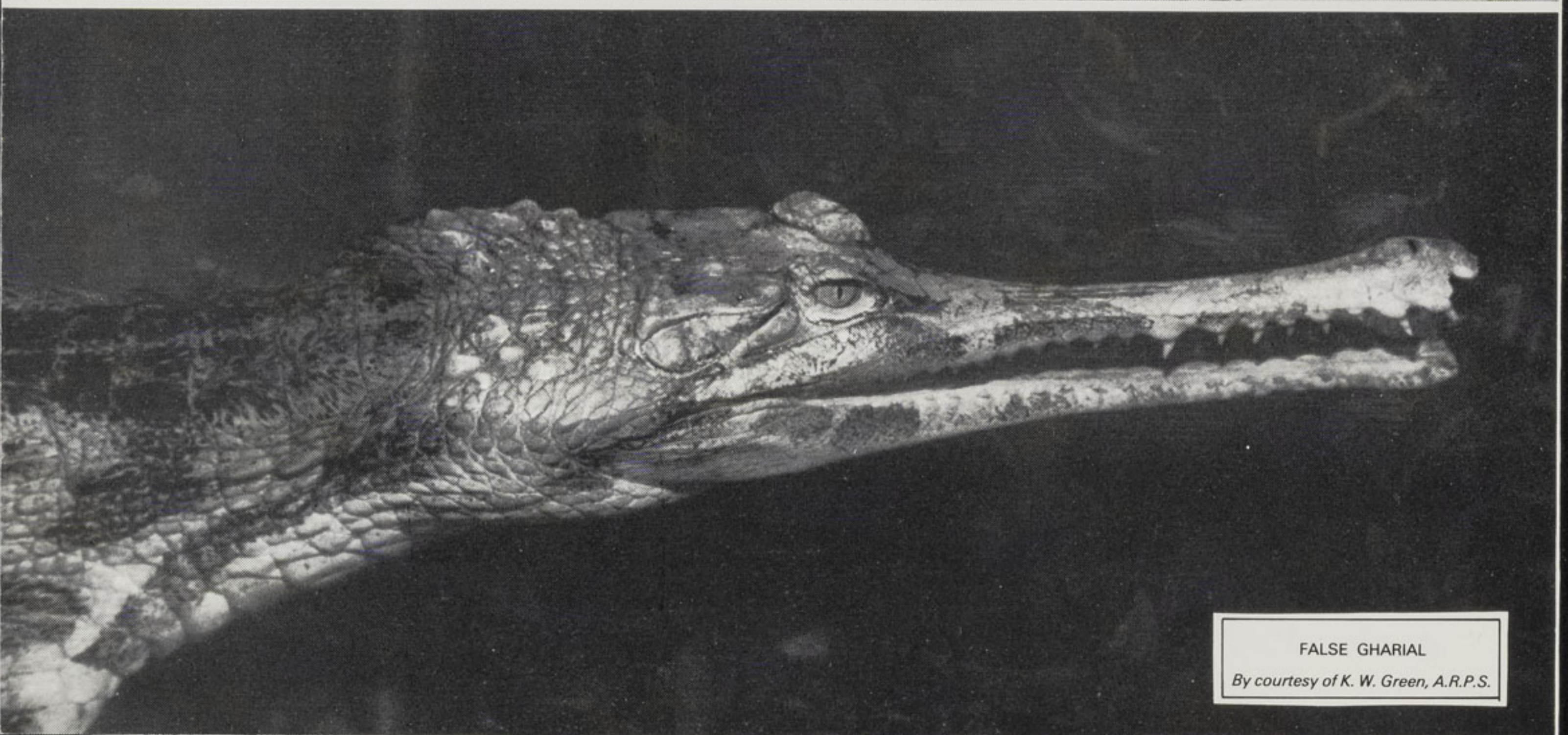
NILE CROCODILE

By courtesy of Dr. S. Szinai



FALSE GHARIAL

By courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.



By the way, the idea that a crocodile's upper jaw is the hinged one is not true. When they are on land they cannot drop their lower jaw, because the ground is in the way, so the only way to open their mouths is to tip the whole skull backwards to raise the upper jaw into the air. And crocodile tears are because they secrete a copious supply of fluid to keep the eyes clean of mud particles, which would irritate and interfere with their vision when out of the water.

Dr. M. R. Brambell,
Director

SUBSCRIPTIONS

CHESTER ZOO NEWS is at present being produced every month and readers who would like to receive the magazine regularly can obtain subscription forms at the Souvenir Shops or the Office. The current charge for 12 issues, including postage, is £3.00 per year.

Completed forms can be handed in to the Souvenir Shops or posted to Mrs. Sandra J. Elliott, Chester Zoo News, Chester Zoo, Chester CH2 1LH.

COVER PICTURE

This month's cover picture is of our baby camel and mother "Zora". The youngster is the first baby camel to have been born at Chester Zoo for about 20 years. He is making excellent progress and can be seen in the Camel House.

The female was pregnant on arrival at Chester, and staff have been anxiously awaiting this latest youngster, which has proved to be most popular with visitors to the Gardens.

GRANADA REPORTS "LIVE ON THE ROAD"

Granada TV recently celebrated its 25th Anniversary, and a number of programmes were produced live at various locations as part of their celebrations. Their final day, the 14th May, was spent at Chester Zoo. Entry to the Zoo after 5 p.m. on that day was free.

A six-foot brown bread "birthday cake" was produced by Roberts Bakery of Northwich for the 25th birthday of "Judy", one of our female elephants. Desmond Morris was interviewed regarding the "Zoo Time" series of programmes which he presented. Various animals were available to illustrate parts of the programme: baby American Tapir, Margay kitten, two baby Orang-utans, Kinkajou and a Boa Constrictor made their debut before a live audience.

Various members of staff who had worked at Chester Zoo for 25 years were also interviewed, including Mr. F. Williams (Clerk of Works) and Mrs. J. Williams (daughter of the late George S. Mottershead and previously Curator of the Aquarium).

LATEST ARRIVALS

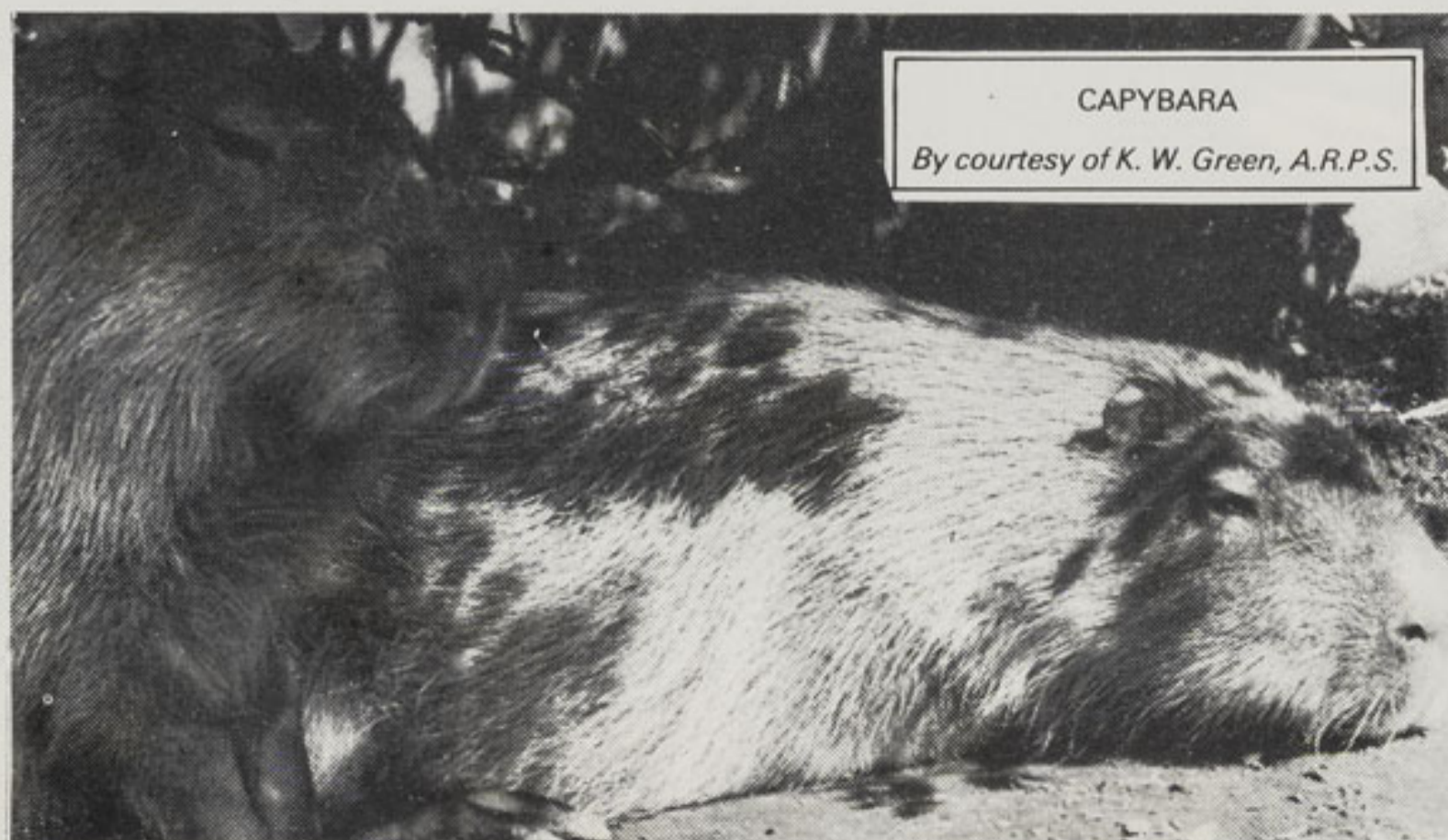
Mammals

3 Reindeer (<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>)	Births
3 Pere David's Deer (<i>Elaphurus davidianus</i>)	Births
3 Coypu (<i>Myocastor coypus</i>)	Birth
1 Capybara (<i>Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris</i>)	Birth
1 Soay Lamb (<i>Ovis aries</i>)	Birth

Reptiles

1 Common Iguana (<i>Iguana iguana</i>)	Presented
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Readers may remember that we acquired a pair of Capybara for the collection about two years ago; these had not been exhibited before. We are very pleased that these animals have now bred. A picture of the adults lazing in the sunshine is shown below.



CAPYBARA

By courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

"JUBILEE"

Chester Zoo's baby elephant "Jubilee" was four years old on the 8th May, 1981. The band of the 22nd Cheshire Regiment are on a goodwill tour of the area and called in on their way to an engagement to "play" for "Jubilee's" birthday.

In the picture shown below, readers can see one of the players getting to know "Jubilee".

BLACK SWAN CYGNET HATCHED

In the Bird Section, the hatching of a Black Swan cygnet has been recorded. These handsome birds have not bred at Chester before. The cygnet was hatched by a foster bantam—a method which is proving to be most successful.

The adult plumage is black, and the flight feathers a sharp contrast in white; the bill is bright red. These swans are found in Australia. The picture on the back page shows the grey youngster.



"JUBILEE" AND BAND OF THE 22ND CHESHIRE REGIMENT
By courtesy of Dave Kendall, County Press Photos



BLACK SWAN CYGNET HATCHED BY FOSTER BANTAM AT CHESTER ZOO

By courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

Printed by W. H. Evans & Sons Ltd., Sealand Trading Estate, Chester